

# Focus On The Future



## ***FOCUS ON THE FUTURE:*** **DEVELOPING THE AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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### **Response to the Report:**

Selection of Initial Priorities  
Prepared March 31, 2006

This project was funded by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia through investments made by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

*Funding provided by:*



## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia, the BC Agriculture Council, the BC Food Processors Association, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada came together recently to commission the Focus on the Future project. The project:

- **Identified and assessed key issues** that are strategically important to the overall long-term success of the BC agri-food industry.
- **Identified specific strategies and meaningful actions that industry, government and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC can pursue** to assist industry to expand, diversify and enhance its competitive position and build a stronger industry future.

The success of Focus on the Future will be determined by the extent to which government, industry and other key stakeholders are able to convert the strategic directions into action. In order to gain buy-in of the major parties, a workshop session was staged involving representatives of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Committee established for the project. Based on the results of the session, 5 key priorities for action in the near-term were identified including:

- Provide project funding and other assistance needed to help industry organizations build their capacity to play key roles in enhancing the long term competitiveness of the sector, including funding of program management for implementing strategic initiatives of the Foundation, consolidating and streamlining services to their members, improving organizational effectiveness and developing sustainable funding options.
- Provide enhanced funding support for the development and implementation of projects that undertake strategic market research and trend analysis, disseminate market information, facilitate marketing skills development and build marketing alliances.
- Bring key government and industry stakeholders together to prepare a formal human resource gap analysis and launch an action plan that will enable the agri-food sector to better meet its needs for management skills as well as for skilled, unskilled and seasonal workers.
- Establish a comprehensive, forward looking Innovation Technology Hub for the BC agri-food and bio-product sectors, building on and enhancing existing research and development resources and infrastructure, and launch near term projects addressing priority needs.
- Implement actions to coordinate Branding BC activities of the 2010 Opportunities Strategy with the Partners in Healthy Eating initiative and other domestic and export branding initiatives.

These 5 key priorities for action in the near-term are further defined below. They will be the focus of joint industry, government and foundation action and refinement in 2006.

**Priority #1: Capacity of Industry Organizations**

<b>Action</b>	Provide project funding and other assistance needed to help industry organizations build their capacity to play key roles in enhancing the long term competitiveness of the sector and provide streamlined, cost effective services to their members.
<b>Target Completion</b>	Increase funding available for projects that can enhance the capacity of industry organizations by July 15, 2006.
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish industry organization capacity building as a strategic priority of the Investment Agriculture Foundation</li> <li>2) Provide enhanced funding levels for projects in the following priority areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and analysis of the operations of existing industry organizations and clusters of industry organizations to identify service gaps and overlaps, opportunities to consolidate services and develop critical mass, streamline operations, build working alliances with other groups to reduce duplication and develop innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms;</li> <li>• Specialized expertise for assisting industry organizations to prepare organizational development strategies and plans, and build on best practices from other sectors and jurisdictions; and</li> <li>• Seminars, workshops and online skills development programs for staff and directors to enhance effectiveness of their industry organizations, including adapting to an ever changing business environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>3) Support industry to review options and define appropriate structures for generating funding and other support for industry organizations</li> </ol>

**Priority #2: Marketing Capabilities**

<b>Action</b>	Support development and implementation of projects that increase access to strategic market research, trends and analysis, disseminate market information, facilitate marketing skills development and build marketing alliances.
<b>Target Completion</b>	Increase funding available for enhancing marketing capability building activities by July 15, 2006.
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish market research and analysis, dissemination of market information, and development of marketing capacity as strategic priorities of the Investment Agriculture Foundation</li> <li>2) Increase the funding available for marketing-related projects led by industry groups and associations which focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market research, analysis, strategy development and market planning for specific</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<b>Activities (continued)</b>	<p>markets – domestic and international, with a focus on business needs and information gaps;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills development training, workshops and other programs tailored to the needs of producers and firms within the sector; and</li> <li>• Trend analysis and competitive intelligence for emerging market opportunities and value added opportunities</li> </ul> <p>3) Provide limited funding to enable smaller industry organizations to access the expertise needed to prepare marketing-related funding proposals</p>
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**Priority #3: Human Resource Development**

<b>Action</b>	Develop and launch a formal human resource action plan that will enable the agri-food sector to better meet its needs for management skills as well as skilled, unskilled and seasonal workers
<b>Target Completion</b>	Secure commitment of government agencies, industry and other stakeholders and complete an assessment of skills and supply gaps and complete a human resource action plan by December 31, 2006
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define the scope of the action plan. The plan will focus on first developing a profile of the workforce; identifying the types of skills that workers and managers in the industry will require over the next five years; assessing the skills and supply gaps amongst managers and workers; reviewing the effectiveness of existing human resource development programs and efforts in the industry; defining the future skills requirements, standards and training needs; assessing options for addressing key gaps which are consistent with the needs of employees and employers; and defining specific actions to be undertaken by government, education and training organizations, and industry to address the existing and emerging human resource gaps</li> <li>2) Secure the commitment of government agencies, industry and other stakeholders to work together to develop an action plan to address human resource needs. Participating government departments will include the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Ministry of Advanced Education, Ministry of Labour, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Other key stakeholders may include representatives of sector associations, industry, unions, educators and trainers</li> <li>3) Develop the human resource action plan, which presents an analysis of current and future skill gaps, and identify specific actions for government, industry, and educators</li> <li>4) Integrate implementation of the plan, as appropriate, into the work plans of existing government human resource programs and industry lead initiatives such as Agri-Food Futures Fund Initiatives</li> </ol>

**Priority #4: Innovation Technology Hub for the Agri-food Industry**

<b>Action</b>	Establish a Technology Innovation Hub for developing and assisting implementation of near-term innovation programs as well as a comprehensive, forward looking innovation strategy for the BC agri-food and bio-science sectors, building on and enhancing existing research and development resources and infrastructure.
<b>Target Completion</b>	Establish a Technology Innovation Hub Working Group for assisting near term innovation programs as well as future development of a forward looking innovation strategy for the BC agri-food and bio-science sectors, by June 30, 2006, and obtain funding commitments for two priority projects by October 31, 2006.
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish an Innovation Technology Hub to lead development and implementation of the strategy including the following interests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</li> <li>• Ministry of Advanced Education</li> <li>• Colleges and universities in BC</li> <li>• Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada</li> <li>• Agriculture, food and beverage processor firms and associations</li> <li>• BC Innovation Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Establish priorities under a broad strategy for innovation focusing largely on key opportunities to incorporate added value into our products and services (e.g. responding to emerging opportunities such as health and wellness, lifestyle products etc.), pursuing emerging knowledge based bio-economic industry opportunities. Develop a near term program to address these needs</li> <li>3) Develop and launch two near term innovation technology projects that address priority needs and opportunities</li> <li>4) Promote further development of research infrastructure supporting the agri-food industry, with particular focus on encouraging establishment and expansion of research centres of excellence that bring resources together to focus on key issues where BC could have a competitive advantage</li> <li>5) Support and facilitate other activities that may be highlighted as priorities such as support for technical analysis and feasibility studies, venture assessments, adaptive research and technology adoption, and prototype development</li> </ol>

**Priority #5: Branding BC**

<b>Action</b>	Adopt coordination linkages between the 2010 Opportunities Initiative, the Making Healthy Choices Initiative and other domestic and export branding initiatives.
<b>Target Completion</b>	Coordinated approaches for Branding BC products and services including the 2010 Opportunities Initiative, Making Healthy Choices Initiative and other branding initiatives, by July 15, 2006
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Convene and facilitate a forum to identify opportunities for coordination among branding programs and for reinforcing messaging to increase effectiveness of branding BC products and services</li><li>2) Establish ongoing linkages and communications for supporting branding of BC products and services</li></ol>

